

Appl. No. 09/695,155
Atty. Docket No. 8284
Amdt. dated April 28, 2003
Reply to Office Action of February 5, 2003
Customer No. 27752

REMARKS

Applicants' attorney has amended Claims 1, 11, 16 and 17 in response to the Examiner's rejection dated 2/5/03. The amendments are made to the independent claims, and as such, are applicable to all of claims that depend from the amended claims.

In particular, the independent claims have been amended to include the further clarification that the mask of the present invention is for forming a pattern layer on a papermaking belt and that the mask comprises a continuous structure. As such, Applicants' attorney believes that the prior art cited by the Examiner fails to teach or suggest the claimed invention. Specifically, the Trokhan '277 reference fails to teach a mask for forming a pattern layer on a papermaking belt, but rather teaches that a portion of the papermaking belt itself can be used to provide backside texture on the machine facing surface of the second layer. Accordingly, the Trokhan '277 reference does not teach or suggest the structure of the present invention.

Regarding the Nguyen et al. '022 reference, Applicants' attorney notes that the subject matter of the patent is directed to providing a multi-level reticle for use in making integrated circuits - a field completely different from and irrelevant to the field of making papermaking belts, to which the present invention is directed. Thus, Applicants' attorney believes that there is no reason why one of ordinary skill in the art of making papermaking belts would look to the Nguyen et al. reference to address the problems solved by the present invention. As noted above, the claims of the present invention have been amended to more clearly indicate that they are directed to masks for forming a pattern layer on a papermaking belt. Further, the mask of the present invention comprises a continuous structure having a pattern of transparent regions and opaque regions. This is different than the multi-level reticle described in the Nguyen et al. reference that includes several different layers of separate materials that have different light transmission characteristics. Accordingly, not only does the Nguyen et al. reference fail to teach or suggest the structure of the claimed invention, it is in a completely distinct and nonanalogous field that one of ordinary skill in the field of making papermaking belts would not likely look to solve the problems addressed by the present invention.

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Accordingly, Applicants' attorney believes that the claims, as presently set forth, are patentable over the prior art and requests that they be allowed.

Conclusion

Applicants have made an earnest effort to place their application in proper form and to distinguish the invention as now claimed from the applied references. In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application, entry of the amendments presented herein, and allowance of Claims 1-18.

Respectfully submitted,
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